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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improvement of student social skills to include respect for self and others, conflict resolution, and self-control. The targeted population consisted of first, fifth, and seventh graders located in northwestern Illinois. The problems of deficiencies in social skills were documented. Data were collected from discipline referrals, teacher journal entries, and student surveys. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students lacked social skills in the areas of respect, empathy, self-control, responsibility, and conflict resolution. Review of the literature suggested that students lacked appropriate social skills due to increased negative social pressures. Other causes that were identified were lack of values taught in the home, student mobility, and the fact that social skills were not given the same emphasis as other academic skills. A review of solution strategies resulted in the decision to improve social skills development through the use of children's literature, direct instruction, and cooperative learning. Post intervention data indicated social skills instruction resulted in improved student behavior and conflict management. Classroom teachers reported that students' use of appropriate social skills increased after the intervention. (Contains 30 references, and a table and 5 figures of data. Appendixes contain survey instruments, an observation checklist, and lesson plans for grades 1, 5, and 7 dealing with respect, empathy, self-control, responsibility, and conflict resolution.) (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING STUDENT SOCIAL SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Bonnie Rives
Tamara Smith
Gail Staples

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & Skylight

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

May, 2000

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ABSTRACT

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Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students lacked social skills in the areas of respect, empathy, self-control, responsibility and conflict resolution. Review of the literature suggested that students lacked appropriate social skills due to increased negative social pressures. Other causes that were identified were lack of values taught in the home, student mobility and the fact that social skills were not given the same emphasis as other academic skills.

A review of solution strategies resulted in the decision to improve social skills development through the use of children's literature, direct instruction, and cooperative learning.

Post intervention data indicated social skills instruction resulted in improved student behavior and conflict management. Classroom teachers reported students' use of appropriate social skills increased after the intervention.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

Problem Statement

The students of the targeted primary, intermediate, and junior high classes exhibited inappropriate peer relations that interfered with classroom productivity and student achievement. Evidence for the existence of the problem included teacher journal entries that described interpersonal relationships in the classroom, teacher and student behavior surveys, and records of instructional time spent addressing behavioral issues.

Immediate Problem Context

This elementary school, located in western Illinois, was unique in being the only school in the district. It included preschool through eighth grade, and provided programs in early childhood and special education for four other neighboring districts. Together with these four elementary districts, this school fed into a neighboring high school. The racial and ethnic background of the district's 750 students fell in the following categories: White 77.2%; Black 4.5%; Mexican-American 17.2%; Asian .5%; and Native American .5%. Low-income students in the district made up 37% of the population. The district had a 94.8% attendance rate and a 16% mobility rate which was based on the number of students who enrolled in or left the school during the school year.

The average class size was 19.5 at the kindergarten level which was slightly below the state average of 22.5. The average class size was 22.7 in first grade with the state average of 23.1. The third grade averaged 25.7 with the state average of 23.5. In the sixth grade, the average was 23.7 with the state average of 24.3. The eighth grade averaged 23 with the state average of 23.5.

The school had two computer labs with technicians and each classroom had two computers for students. A library with a full-time librarian was available daily. Curriculum for all students included language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, art, computer education, physical education, music appreciation, and drug awareness. In the junior high school, physical education, family living skills, art education, and industrial arts were offered to all students on a daily basis. The district provided a hot lunch program, busing, full time nurse, school counselor, in school suspension (I.S.S) personnel, and dean of students. The district housed offices for school psychologists and social workers. Extracurricular activities including band, chorus, and athletics were offered to all students. The district had an active parent group which was very involved at all levels in providing financial and voluntary support.

Of the 52 teachers in this district, 10.2% were male, 89.8% were female and all were White. There were 29 regular classroom teachers, and 23 teachers were in specialized areas. The average length of teaching experience in the district was 15 years. In addition to a bachelor's degree, 21.9% had a master's degree. The pupil-teacher ratio was 18:1 and the pupil-administrator ratio was 247:1.

The teachers' salaries in the district ranged from $23,000 to $54, 800 with an average salary of $34,000, which was below the average for districts of its size in Illinois.

The average administrator salary was $64,800. The annual total expenditure per student was $5,100.

The Surrounding Community

This community in western Illinois was founded in the early 1900's as the home of a major transportation facility. In 1917, a large number of Mexican-American workers moved to the community to strengthen the work force which was diminished by the military demands of World War I. In 1968, a major foundry was built in the community, which provided economic stability. Operations were discontinued in the late 1980's. The transportation facility continued to be a major economic factor in the community until it closed in the early 1980's.

There were over 180 locally owned businesses in the community, which was part of a medium sized metropolitan area. The community included a hospital, police department, volunteer fire department, and churches of various denominations. The elected leader of the community was a mayor who oversaw a council of eight elected aldermen from four wards.

The population of this urban community was approximately 7,000 people. The racial and ethnic background of the community was 85% White, 2% Black, 12% Mexican-American, and 1 % other. The median per capita income was $12, 700. The average household income was $27,200. Median housing value was $59,300. Poverty percentage of the population was 15%.

National Context of the Problem

According to Goleman (1995) and Gardner (1983), social and emotional skills are essential for success in life. Studies show that Goleman's emotional intelligence was an

important predictor of school achievement, job success, family stability, and physical health (Pool, 1997). A report by the United States Department of Labor stated that the interpersonal skills Gardner described were essential for high school graduates if they were to become successful members of society (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997).

In today's society, children face an extremely challenging social environment. They encounter economic pressures, poverty, increased violence and abuse, exposure to drugs and alcohol, and disruption of family relationships (Berman & Berreth, 1997). Researchers have found evidence of emotional and behavioral problems among American children. A growing number of students across the country are experiencing social, emotional, and physical problems as well as academic difficulties (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997; Garbarino, 1997). While elementary students tend to behave inappropriately in response to their frustrations, older students resort to drinking, smoking, drugs, sexual activity, and truancy. These behaviors have a direct effect on academic achievement for the affected child and other students in the classroom (Frieman, 1997).

One reason children are inadequate at this basic life skill is that society has not bothered to make sure that every child is taught the essentials of handling anger, empathy, impulse control, conflict resolution, or other fundamentals of emotional competence (Goleman, 1995). Educators are aware that teaching social and emotional skills can have a positive and long lasting effect on academic achievement (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997). Early intervention is critical to student success. Programs which develop the appropriate skills include direct instruction, modeling, experience, and practice (Berman & Berreth 1997).

These skills may often be taught within the context of other academic subjects. Children's literature provides a positive resource for instruction of social skills that incorporates academic skills as well. Stories can be used as creative introductions while teaching specific skills. As students relate to characters through stories, the skills become meaningful and personal (DeGeorge, 1998).

Due to the changing society, today's youth need increased opportunities for social and emotional learning. Teachers need to focus on the instruction of these skills with the same intensity they give academic subjects. It is the child's overall development, not simply cognitive or intellectual development, that makes academic success possible. Programs which develop social and emotional competence enhance academic performance and physical well-being. This competence prepares students for successful future endeavors. "Shouldn't we be teaching these most essential skills for life to every child-now more than ever? And if not now, when?" (Goleman, 1995, p. 287)

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of student deficiencies in social skills researchers in the targeted first, fifth, and seventh grade classrooms administered student surveys to assess social skills awareness in five areas. The skills addressed were respect, empathy, self-control, responsibility, and conflict resolution. An independent observer recorded both positive and negative interpersonal behavior in each classroom. Observations were made in three areas: verbal, nonverbal, and physical. Instructional time spent addressing behavioral issues was also documented.

Student surveys were administered during the first week of data collection. The survey form was developed by the researchers and assessed student awareness of appropriate social skills and interpersonal responses (Appendix A). Fifty nine students completed the survey. Each teacher read and explained the meaning of the survey items to the students. This was done to insure each student's understanding and comprehension of the survey items. Researchers compiled student survey data from all of the targeted classrooms. Results comparing student responses in each of the five skill areas were illustrated in Figure 1.

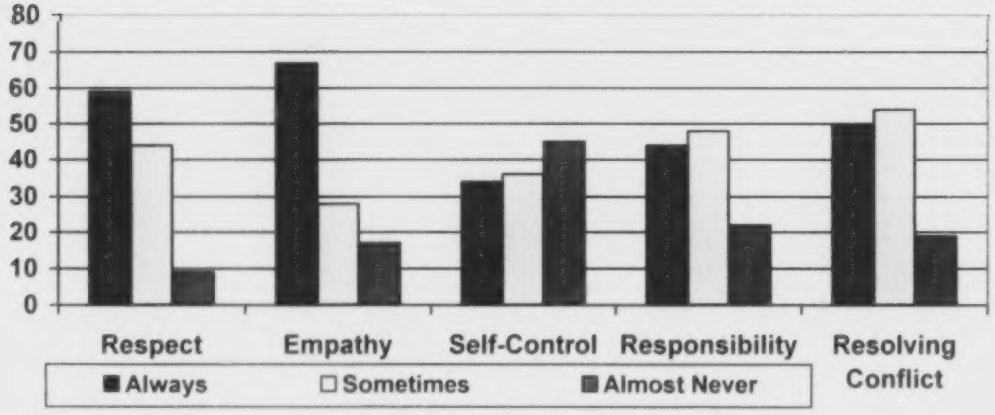

Figure 1. Student responses indicating awareness of appropriate social skills in September 1999.

During a two-week preintervention period an independent observer documented student interpersonal behaviors, both positive and negative in verbal, nonverbal, and physical areas. A behavioral checklist was developed by the researchers to aid in the recording process (Appendix B). A summary of the number of incidents and behavior categories is presented in Figure 2.

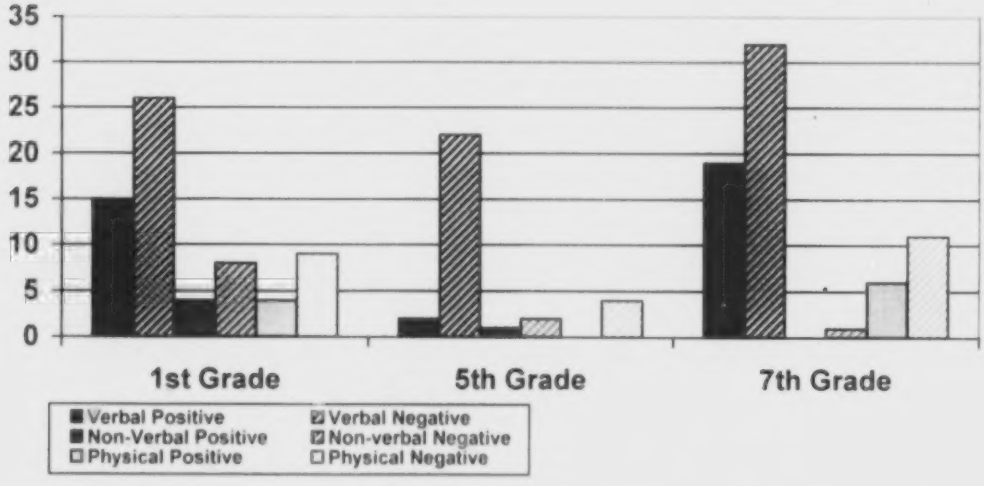

Figure 2. Incidence of interpersonal behavior observed in the targeted classrooms in September 1999.

Thirty teachers completed the teacher survey to appraise current status of social skills instruction in the district and to determine the extent of behavior problems in the classroom (Appendix C). Results of the survey were compiled and presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Item Analysis of Teacher Survey Completed in September 1999.

	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Almost Never
Students use appropriate social skills in the classroom.	1	13	15	1	0
Students use appropriate social skills during less structured situations.	0	8	16	6	0
Students participate in cooperative learning activities.	1	11	17	1	0
Students are taught social skills.	9	18	3	0	0
Students use acceptable ways to express anger.	2	10	12	4	2
Students stay away from situations that can lead to trouble.	1	7	19	2	1
Students accept consequences for their behavior in a positive manner.	3	9	12	5	1
Class is losing instructional time to deal with behavior problems.	3	13	10	4	0

In summary, the problem of poor interpersonal skills in the targeted classrooms was supported by the evidence collected. Most students surveyed were aware of appropriate social behaviors, yet many reported they had difficulty putting them into practice in problem situations. Observations of the targeted classrooms indicated that student responses to one another were more negative than positive. According to the teacher survey, students did not consistently display appropriate social skills especially during problem situations. While many teachers were teaching these skills in the classroom, no formal programs addressing social and emotional skills were incorporated

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into the curriculum for the district. Most teachers reported that they were losing instructional time to deal with behavior problems. One teacher stated that "It does seem as though we spend more time each year dealing with social problems, addressing the basic niceties of everyday life." Another teacher commented that "We should remember that getting along with others is often as important in the real world as anything we teach."

Probable Causes of Problem

Changes in family structure, economic distress, and latchkey children are factors that cause children to grow up without learning basic social skills which are needed to work cooperatively in the classroom. Teachers at the targeted school experienced changes in the classroom population as evidenced by a high student mobility rate of 16%. The school did not include social skills instruction as part of the curriculum.

Today's educators tend to agree that students have changed, family structure has changed, and society has changed. Students enter school lacking basic emotional abilities which are the essential foundation for learning. Educators assume that these fundamental skills are being taught in the home. Children today experience an extremely challenging social environment and yet they lack the very skills needed to handle moral conflicts (Berreth & Berman, 1997). A survey of parents and teachers shows a trend for the present generation of children to be more troubled emotionally. They are more lonely, depressed, angry, unruly, nervous, impulsive, and aggressive. The last decade has seen steadily increasing reports of childhood violence and abuse which reflect emotions out of control in families, communities, and society (Goleman, 1995).

Family structure has been influenced by divorce, working mothers, and mobility (Lickona, 1991). Due to the demands of today's economy, parents are working longer hours and spending less time with their children than their own parents had with them (O'Neil, 1996). The lack of adult supervision and family involvement in constructive, cooperative activities has compounded the effects of other negative influences (Garbarino, 1997). Many children come to school without breakfast, enough sleep, or the feeling that anyone cares for them. Teachers can no longer assume that children come from strong, supportive families that teach moral values of society. Therefore schools must take a more active role in moral education (Lickona, 1991).

In modern education the significance of interpersonal intelligence has been reduced. Skills such as empathy, understanding emotions, forming positive relationships, and responding to others appropriately are not considered as important now as they were in the past (Gardner, 1995). The instruction of moral values in the school can be a controversial matter due to of the variety of cultures and family situations. The dilemma for educators is to decide whether to teach values or teach about values. Schools and teachers worry about the legal aspects of teaching values. Some educators argue that teaching certain moral values is a form of indoctrination (Lickona, 1991). Incorporating social and emotional programs into schools constitutes a major change in any curriculum. Many teachers may be reluctant to include topics that seem unrelated to the basic academic subjects (Goleman, 1995).

Today there is a widespread sense that children are changing in ways that reflect upon all of society. Moral problems which face today's youth range from greed and dishonesty to violent crime, drug abuse, and suicide. Young people experience a material

culture that promotes instant gratification. The desire to make money increasingly drives society and shapes the goals and values of youth (Lickona, 1991). Another part of the problem is the role mass media play in the lives of children. Violence saturates cartoons, television shows, movies, and video games that children view. By the age of 18, a typical child witnesses an estimated 250,000 acts of violence and sexual scenes (Lickona, 1991). The violence they see around them desensitizes them to their own feelings and those of others (Berreth & Berman, 1997). For some children violence is a fact of life in their neighborhoods or even in their homes. Each year, over three million children across the country report having been threatened with physical violence or have been physically assaulted in school (Canter, 1995).

In summary, probable causes for the lack of social skills gathered from the school and literature included changes in family structure and economic stability, lack of adult supervision in the home, high mobility rate in the school, and lack of formal social skills instruction in the school. The focus of this study addressed the need for social and emotional skills which are essential for building interpersonal relations in the family, school, and community.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Inappropriate social skills are a major concern of educators because they interfere with classroom productivity and student achievement. Teachers lose valuable teaching time dealing with behavioral problems caused by the lack of appropriate social skills (Canter, 1995). A growing number of children come to school without social and emotional competence. Since every child goes to school, communities are turning to educators to teach children the basic lessons for living that they may not experience otherwise (Goleman, 1995).

The responsibility for teaching social skills lies with the teacher. According to Lickona, (1992) "The most basic form of moral education is the treatment we receive" (p. 72). How a teacher manages her classroom is a model in itself, a lesson in social skills. Children need positive role models and the teacher they meet on the first day of school is typically that person (Goleman, 1995). At the base of a successful social and emotional skills program is the teacher who creates a positive, caring classroom environment. A caring classroom provides students with a sense of belonging. They feel valued and committed to everyone's growth and learning (Lewis, Schaps, and Watson, 1996).

One approach to solving the problem is through the use of direct instruction of social skills. According to Cummings and Haggerty (1997) a systematic approach to teaching social skills which includes specific instructional strategies is essential to providing students with concrete ways to handle emotions. Berreth and Berman (1997) state that we can guide children to develop social skills and moral values through modeling, direct instruction, experience and continued practice.

Another approach to developing social skills is to use the concept of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is described as a collection of strategies that encourage cooperative interactions between students to achieve lesson objectives (Johnson & Johnson). Children are assigned or given the option of choosing specific roles and responsibilities necessary to accomplish a learning objective. Pupils are encouraged to develop trust in each other. Cooperative learning has been shown very beneficial in teaching children social values and skills (Costa, Bellanca, and Fogarty, 1992). Lickona (1992) said that cooperative learning effectively teaches values and academics at the same time. Children learn the value of cooperation, communication and community through experiences in cooperative learning (Lickona, 1992).

An emerging strategy in teaching emotional social skills is to incorporate lessons on feelings and relationships with other subjects already being taught, such as reading, writing, health, science, and social studies (Goleman, 1995). Although the idea seems new to some, it was actually the premise of the McGuffey Readers, which were used in many schools before 1900. The stories addressed morals and values and how to teach them to young readers (Lickona, 1992).

The optimal design for a program addressing social and emotional skills is to begin early, be developmentally appropriate, continue throughout the school years, and intertwine efforts at school, at home, and in the community. Many programs include classes for parents that teach them what their children are learning and help them deal with their children's emotional lives. Some programs recruit caring members of the community as mentors for students from unstable homes. This increases the likelihood that what children learn in these programs will not remain at school, but will be practiced in the challenges of life (Goleman, 1995).

Researchers will be using literature as an introduction combined with direct instruction techniques to provide students with appropriate social skill models, cueing systems, role-play activities, and practice. Problem solving activities in cooperative learning situations will provide real life practice with interpersonal skills.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of using literature which focuses on social behavior during the period of September to December 1999, students from the targeted classes will demonstrate increased awareness of interpersonal behaviors as measured by student surveys and observation checklists.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Share literature with students which demonstrates social behavior.
2. Identify targeted behavior or problem presented in the story.
3. Determine relevancy to classroom situation.

As a result of direct instruction of social skills during the period of September to December 1999, students from the targeted classes will demonstrate appropriate

responses in problem situations as measured by student performance during role-play and teacher observations.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Model appropriate responses.
2. Cue students with appropriate responses.
3. Provide practice situations.
4. Provide opportunities for generalization and reinforcement of the skills.

As a result of implementing cooperative learning strategies during the period of September to December 1999, the targeted students will demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills as measured by teacher observation and student journal entries.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Review social skills previously taught.
2. Set up cooperative learning situations involving problem solving.
3. Assess students' use of social skills through observation or student journals.

Action Plan for the Intervention

In order to achieve the project objectives that would allow students to improve their ability to exhibit appropriate social skills and increase instructional time researchers developed and implemented the following action plan. Data collection was obtained during two weeks in September. Letters describing the project were sent home to parents (Appendix D). A structured learning lesson and a cooperative learning lesson were written for each targeted skill. These bi-weekly lessons lasted for approximately thirty minutes. The period of intervention encompassed approximately 14 weeks and covered five skill areas.

Week 1 – Introduction to social skills

Week 2 & 3 – Respect for self and others

Week 4 & 5 – Empathy

Week 6 & 7 – Self-control

Week 8 & 9 – Social Responsibility

Week 10 & 11 – Resolving Conflict

Week 12 – Wrap up and Reflection

Structured lessons incorporated the use of literature, direct instruction of social skills, positive modeling, role-play, and practice (Appendix E through V). These weekly lessons followed this format:

1. Introduce the skill to be taught through a book, story, poem, or song
2. Identify the skill through use of T-Chart, discussion, or poster
3. Discuss relevancy to classroom situation
4. Formulate the skill steps
5. Model the skill being targeted
6. Discuss the modeling of the skill
7. Organize and guide student role play
8. Provide feedback following role-play
9. Student reflections

Cooperative learning activities reinforced the skills and provided authentic practice in the classroom. The weekly lessons followed this format:

1. Review skill steps
2. Discuss relevancy to classroom situation

3. Set up cooperative learning situations to reinforce skills

4. Allow time for student reflection in journals

Methods of Assessment

In order to determine the effects of the intervention the following assessments were completed. Student surveys were re-administered to the targeted classes and analyzed by the researchers. An independent observer documented the interpersonal behaviors of the students, both positive and negative in the areas of verbal, non-verbal and physical responses. Researchers recorded observations of student behaviors and interactions in the teacher implementation journals. Individual student reflections were used to assess student understanding of the topics covered.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objectives of the project were to increase the targeted students' awareness of interpersonal behaviors and to improve their ability to practice appropriate social skills of respect, empathy, responsibility, self-control and conflict resolution. Social skills instruction and cooperative learning were implemented to effect the desired changes.

The researchers used structured lessons which incorporated literature to introduce and teach social skills. Fables, stories and poems were used to present the skills in a variety of situations. Discussions focused on each social skill identified, and researchers assessed student awareness of the suitability of the targeted behavior. Students were asked to explain how the situation presented through the literature related to their own experiences in life.

Through direct instruction techniques researchers taught the students the appropriate social response to the situation by modeling the skill, cueing the students, and providing them with practice through role-play experiences. Students were guided to generalize the skill and apply what they learned to their every day life. Researchers reinforced appropriate skills in the classroom.

The researchers reviewed social skills through the use of cooperative learning activities. Students participated in problem solving lessons relating to the presented social skill. These lessons involved listening, reasoning, decision-making, and shared responsibility. Through observation and reflections students were assessed on both understanding and application of the social skills.

Due to the complexity of the solution strategy, researchers determined that the intervention would exceed the proposed time frame and therefore extended the lessons to sixteen weeks. At the first grade level, two to three lessons were taught each week. At the fifth and seventh grade levels only one lesson was taught each week due to scheduling constraints.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of the intervention researchers re-administered the student survey which evaluated student awareness of appropriate social skills and interpersonal responses (Appendix A). Results were tabulated and presented in Figure 3.

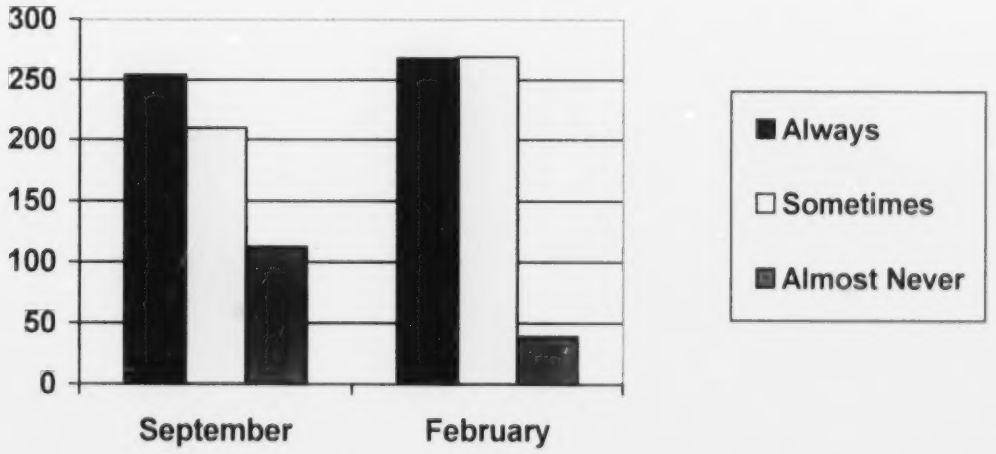

Figure 3: Student responses indicating awareness of appropriate social skills in February 2000.

The student survey results for February indicate improvement in student awareness of social skills. Most students reported that they used appropriate skills of respect, empathy, responsibility, self-control and conflict resolution. To further illustrate growth in student awareness of appropriate social skills and interpersonal responses, a comparison of student survey results in September and February is presented in Figure 4.

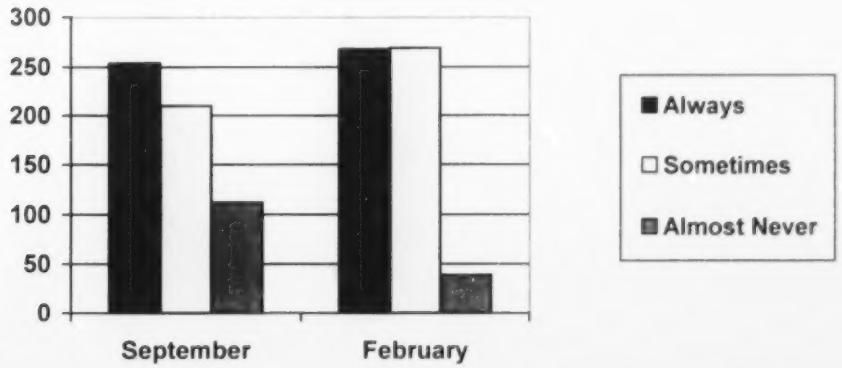

Figure 4. Comparison of student survey results indicating awareness of appropriate social skills in September 1999 and February 2000.

Upon comparing results of the student surveys completed in September and February, researchers noted positive changes in students' awareness of appropriate social skills, however some students continued to have difficulty practicing the targeted skills. Researchers believed that while student awareness had been raised some of the students had not incorporated the skills into their daily lives.

During a two-week period in February an independent observer documented interpersonal student responses, both positive and negative, in three areas: verbal, non-verbal, and physical. Observations of the targeted students were made during direct instruction and

cooperative learning lessons in academic areas. Comparisons of observations made in September and February are illustrated in Figure 5.

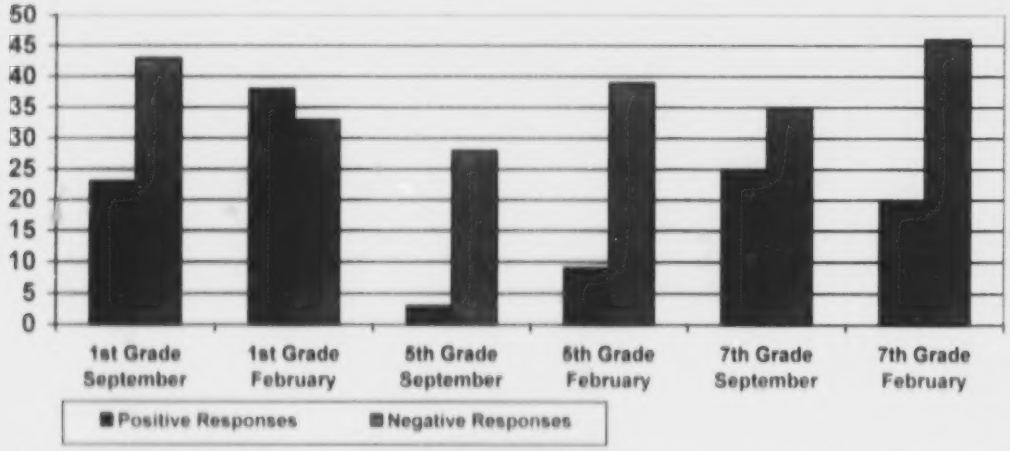

Figure5. Comparison of observations of students' interpersonal responses in the targeted classrooms during September and February.

According to the data collected for the assessment the intervention appears to have had a positive effect on interpersonal behavior at the first grade level. Direct observations of students' verbal, non-verbal, and physical responses to one another were more positive than negative. Following observations in the first grade classroom the school principal stated, "it has become quite apparent that the social skills being taught have had a positive effect on the students. A community of learners who work cooperatively in a positive manner prevails. The students offer encouraging words to each other during their daily routine."

At the fifth grade level the data show that students continued to respond to one another in a more negative manner; however there was an increase in both positive and negative responses. The principal noted when observing in this classroom that the students were not working together or practicing appropriate social skills. According to the school administrators this group had a history of inappropriate behavior for the past several years.

Data collected by the independent observer in the seventh grade class did not show positive growth after the intervention. Students continued to display more negative responses to one another during these observation periods.

Observations made by the researchers during cooperative learning lessons in all three classes indicated improvement in the students' ability to work together as a team. Students were more likely to encourage one another, and their reflections demonstrated increased understanding of social topics. One first grader wrote in his journal "You need to treat other people the way you want to be treated." Another first grade student stated that you should "not call names and don't be mean. Be kind and gentle." After a fifth grade lesson on paying compliments, students were directed to pay compliments to others and record the responses. One student wrote the following: "I was with my friend. I said, 'You're so good in sports.' He said, 'Why, thank you.'" Another responded that when he paid the compliment "You have nice hair" the reaction was "Yeah, thanks, man, thanks." During a lesson on self-control, a seventh grade student wrote, "You should think before you talk." Another student wrote, "Don't open old problems, just keep them shut."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data the students showed improvement in awareness of appropriate social skills of respect, empathy, responsibility, self-control and conflict resolution. This was illustrated in both the student survey results and student response journals. Students increased the use of appropriate responses and behavior during social skills lessons. Researchers observed a positive transfer to interpersonal behavior in daily situations. Students were able to incorporate the language and skills from the lessons

taught to subsequent events in the classroom. When a conflict did arise the social skills previously taught were used and reinforced by both the teachers and students.

The data recorded by the independent observer showed that the students at the fifth and seventh grade levels continued to respond to one another through more negative means after the intervention. These observations were of short duration and in isolated conditions. At the seventh grade level the observations were made during physical education class which is a less structured and more competitive atmosphere. The independent observer may have had a negative effect on student behavior. Regular observations during the intervention period may have been more useful and reliable since the students would have been more at ease with the observer. Researchers believe that despite these data the intervention had a positive effect on the students involved as demonstrated by their behavior on a daily basis.

Upon consideration, the researchers suggest that the intervention could have been more effective if certain aspects were different. Social skills lessons need to be scheduled on a regular basis rather than just worked in to an already busy day. At the junior high level, lessons should be taught in academic settings, rather than in physical education classes which tend to be less structured than the regular classroom.

Based on the data collected by the independent observer researchers recommend the direct teaching of social skills begin as early as possible and continue throughout the students' school career. Younger children are more easily influenced and are willing to accept new ideas. The issues that confront students as they get older may impact the possibility for positive change.

The researchers recommend that the teaching of social skills through the use of literature is a meaningful and enjoyable way to learn new skills. The situations presented in

the literature provided a basis upon which the social skills could be reinforced after the lesson was taught. The use of cooperative learning techniques during the practice stage had a beneficial impact on student involvement. The lessons gave students opportunities to practice and internalize the social skills that were being taught.

The opinion of the researchers is that teachers need to focus on social skills with the same intensity as academic subjects. Early intervention can have a positive effect on student success. The more exposure, practice, and reinforcement children get with social skills, the more appropriate their behavior is going to be in the classroom, on the playground, and in their neighborhoods. Integrating social skills instruction into academic subjects increases student awareness and places emphasis on these most essential skills for life.

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APPENDIX A

Student Survey

Date_____

Directions: Each of the questions will ask you about how well you do something. Please answer the way you usually feel about these questions. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Do I listen to others?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always
2. Do I treat others the way I like to be treated?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always
3. Do I show others I care about how they feel?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always
4. Do I try to understand other people's feelings?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always
5. Do I keep my temper when I am upset?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always
6. Do I stay in control when I am teased?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always
7. Do I avoid trouble situations?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always
8. Do I accept what happens when I do something I shouldn't have done?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always
9. Do I deal with my anger in ways that others won't be hurt?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always
10. Do I try to settle disagreements so that everyone is happy?	Almost never	Sometimes	Always

Respect 1&2
Empathy 3&4
Self-control 5&6
Responsibility 7&8
Resolving Conflict 9&10

APPENDIX B

Observation Checklist

WEEK OF _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
VERBAL Positive					
VERBAL Negative					
NON-VERBAL Positive					
NON-VERBAL Negative					
PHYSICAL Positive					
PHYSICAL Negative					
Minutes spent addressing behavioral issues.					

APPENDIX C

Teacher Survey

Choose one answer for each of the following questions.

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always

1. Do your students exhibit appropriate social skills in the classroom?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Do your students exhibit appropriate social skills during less structured situations?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Do you use cooperative learning strategies in your classroom?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Do you teach social skills in your classroom?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Do your students use acceptable ways to express anger?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Do your students stay away from situations that may get them into trouble?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Do your students accept consequences for their behavior without becoming defensive or upset?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Do you feel that you are losing instructional class time to deal with social problems?	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____ Thank you for your input.

Bonnie, Tammy, Gail

APPENDIX D

PARENT LETTER

SILVIS SCHOOL DISTRICT 34
1305-FIFTH AVENUE
SILVIS, ILLINOIS
61282

Dear Parents, October 1, 1999

We are currently working on our Master's Degrees in Teaching. One of the requirements is to conduct a research project in our classrooms. During the next nine weeks, we will be teaching lessons designed to increase student awareness of appropriate social skills. Our program will include reading stories and books, discussing problem solving behaviors, role play and practice. Students will be learning appropriate ways to deal with situations that can occur at home, at school, or in their peer group. If you have any questions about these activities, please feel free to contact any of us at 792-0639.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Bonnie Rives
Mrs. Tamara Smith
Mrs. Gail Staples

APPENDIX E

RESPECT

By Gail Staples

CONTENT FOCUS: Social Skills: Respect

MATERIALS: A Weekend With Wendell, by Kevin Hanks, items to share such as magnets, markers, paper.

TASK FOCUS: To list strategies for sharing and taking turns while working or playing together.

PRODUCT: List of sharing strategies.

PROBLEM: How to show respect for another person's wants and needs. How to take turns or share a desired item so that both partners are satisfied.

ACTIVITY:

1. Read the story and discuss the things Wendell and Sophie did together. *Was Wendell using good manners at Sophie's house? Was he showing that he respected her? How did this make Sophie feel? Have you ever felt that way?*
2. Ask students to list things that have to be shared in the classroom. *Why do we have to share things in this classroom? (We don't have enough things for everyone to have their own.) What are some things that could happen when people don't want to share? What are some ways we can share things? (Take turns, set a timer, work together)*
3. Pair students and tell them that they are going to have ten minutes to share a special classroom item. Give each set of partners an item to share. Tell them to discuss as many ways as they can to share the item so that both partners are happy. Have them try their favorite strategy.
4. After ten minutes, ask students to describe their strategies for sharing the items. Write suggestions on the board.

REFLECTIONS:

- How did you feel about the way you and your partner shared the item?
- Explain how you might get to use some of the other items used in this activity.
- What are some of the good things that can happen when people share? *(Everyone can be happy, we can get more done with fewer arguments, we can learn from one another.)*
- Explain what is meant by the idea "sharing is caring". *(Sharing is a way of showing respect for one another's feelings.)*

APPENDIX F

EMPATHY

By Gail Staples

CONTENT FOCUS: Social Skills: Empathy, Encouragement

MATERIALS: The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Teasing, by Stan & Jan Berenstain, T-Chart, construction paper, pencils, scissors.

TASK FOCUS: Students will choose five encouraging expressions, words or actions to practice every day.

PRODUCT: Rainbow of Encouragement

PROBLEM: What are positive things we can say to encourage another person?

ACTIVITY:

1. Read the book and discuss the problem of teasing. *How do you feel when someone teases you? Why did Brother Bear stick up for Milton when he was the one being teased? (Brother Bear knew how it felt to be teased.)*
2. *When Brother Bear stuck up for Milton he was showing that he cared about Milton's feelings. He was showing empathy for Milton.*
3. *When Brother Bear got to know Milton, what did he find out? (That Milton lived on a farm, that he could do many things well, that he could wrestle.)*
4. *At the end of the story, the cubs were saying nice things about Milton. They were encouraging him to do well. What are some ways that we can encourage others?*
5. Display the Encouragement T-Chart. Ask students to add words to describe what encouragement looks like, *(smiles, nods, thumbs up, energizers)* what encouragement sounds like, *(good job, way to go, applause, yeah!)* and what encouragement feels like *(pat on the back, high fives).*
6. Distribute construction paper. Have students trace their hand onto the paper, then cut it out. Have them choose one encouraging word to write on each finger.
7. The Rainbow of Encouragement can be displayed in an as a reminder to use five words of encouragement each day.
8. Ask students to write reflections in their learning logs.

REFLECTIONS:

- How do you feel when someone encourages you?
- How do you feel when you encourage someone else?
- How can encouragement affect our behavior?
- How can encouragement help us get along better in the classroom?

APPENDIX G

SELF-CONTROL

By Gail Staples

CONTENT FOCUS: Social Skills: Self-Control

MATERIALS: Peter Rabbit, By Beatrix Potter

TASK FOCUS: Students will recognize that there are many different ways of behaving and that we choose how we will behave.

PRODUCT: None

PROBLEM: What are the kinds of behavior that are better for you and for others?

ACTIVITY:

1. Read the story and discuss. *What did Mrs. Rabbit tell her little rabbits? What did Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail chooses to do? What did Peter choose to do? Explain who you think made the better choice, and tell why you think so.*
2. Tell students that they are going to become robot rabbits. *Do you know what* robots *are? (Robots are machines that do not think for them. They do what someone tells them to do.)*
3. Ask five students to pretend to be robot rabbits. Have the other students act as the observers to see if all of the robot rabbits are working correctly. Give robot rabbits four of these commands:
   - Stand up
   - Hop three times
   - Act like you are losing your temper
   - Sit down and be noisy.
   - Hop in a circle.
   - Throw a fit.
   - Act like you are eating blackberries.
   - Lie down on the floor and roll around.
   - Sit down quietly.
   - Hop to the door.
   - Stomp your feet and make noise.
4. Discuss what the observers noticed. Continue until all students have a turn to become robot rabbits.

REFLECTIONS:

- Did the robot rabbits have choice about their behavior? Why or why not?
- Do people have a choice about their behavior, or must they act the way someone tells them to act?
- If you can choose your behavior, what are some of choices that are better for you and others?
- When you choose to behave appropriately, you are being responsible.

APPENDIX H

RESPONSIBILITY

By Gail Staples

CONTENT FOCUS: Social Skills: Responsibility

MATERIALS: Being Lazy, by Joy Berry, The Hungry Giant , & The Hungry Giant's Soup, by Joy Cowley, paper and pencils.

TASK FOCUS: Students will identify characteri-tics of laziness and their effects on others.

PRODUCT: Student letters.

PROBLEM: What can we do about the problem of laziness?

ACTIVITY:

1. Have class brainstorm a definition for the word lazy. Write the definition on the board.
2. Read Being Lazy. Have student's role play the situations in the book.
3. Discuss the problem of laziness and the effect it has on others.
4. Pass out copies of The Hungry Giant or The Hungry Giant's Soup to pairs of students. At risk students should be paired with fluent readers.
5. Direct the students to buddy read the story and discuss the problem the people of the town had with the giant and the solution they came up with to deal with the problem.
6. Have the class brainstorm other solutions to the problem of laziness.
7. Have each student write a letter to one of the people of the town explaining what he or she knows about laziness and advising them on a possible solution.
8. Guide the students in using invented spelling techniques.
9. Have students refer to the word wall to spell sight words.
10. Ask volunteers to read their letters to the class.

REFLECTIONS:

- Explain what lazy means.
- Why is laziness a problem?
- How do you feel around someone who is being lazy?
- What are some ways in which you can deal with a lazy person?
- What are some situations in which a person may be lazy without bothering others?

APPENDIX I

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

By Gail Staples

CONTENT FOCUS: Social Skills: Conflict Resolution

MATERIALS: Dinosaur in Trouble, journals, large copy of the "Conflict Circle", red and blue markers, one "Conflict Circle" worksheet for each student, red and blue pencils.

TASK FOCUS: Students will identify conflict and brainstorm possible solutions.

PRODUCT: Completed Conflict Circles

PROBLEM: How do we identify and resolve conflict?

ACTIVITY:

1. Have students read the book independently.
2. Ask students to reflect on the problem with Dinny and the solutions the people tried in the story. *What is another solution they may have tried?*
3. Display the large conflict circle and ask students to identify the conflict in the story. Write this with the red marker in the center circle.
4. Ask students to identify each part of the conflict, writing each step in the next larger circle.
5. Continue brainstorming the conflict beyond the story, adding actions the dinosaur or people may have done, until the dinosaurs all become extinct, for example. *What happens to the circles as the conflict continues? How can we stop the conflict from getting bigger?*
6. Ask students to name their solutions to the problem.
7. Write student solutions with the blue marker, unless the solution extends the conflict. Explain that sometimes we choose an action that causes the conflict to get bigger.
8. Have students identify those solutions that stop the conflict from getting bigger. *These are peaceful solutions to conflict. They help us solve our problems without making them worse.*
9. Divide the students into groups of three.
10. Distribute Conflict Circles to each team. Have them number themselves according to the first letter in their first name. Have them proceed through the activity in numerical order.
    1. Use the red pencil to add an action that extends the conflict.
    2. Use the blue pencil to add a peaceful solution to the conflict.
    3. Use the red pencil to add an action that extends the conflict
    1. Use the blue pencil to add a peaceful solution to the conflict.
    2. Use the red pencil to add an action that extends the conflict
    3. Use the blue pencil to add a peaceful solution to the conflict.
11. Have teams read their conflict circles to the class.

REFLECTIONS:

- What happens to the circles as the conflict continues?
- Explain what makes conflicts get bigger.
- What are some conflicts you have had?
- Explain what peaceful solutions you have used.
- How do you feel when you solve a problem this way?

APPENDIX J

Literature Sources
First Grade

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APPENDIX K

RESPECT

By Tamara Smith

SOCIAL SKILL: Respect for self and others

EXPECTATIONS: Students will identify how they would like to be treated and will be able to demonstrate being respectful to one another as it applies to interaction in the classroom.

MATERIALS: Chapter 19, "The Ninth Worm" from How to Eat Fried Worms by Thomas Rockwell, copies of "Classroom Pledge."

INTRODUCTION: Read the chapter together. Ask the children what their reactions are to this and how they would react if they were in this situation.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss with the children how Billy must have felt when he saw the size of the worm for that day. Were Alan and Joe acting fairly? Would they have wanted to be treated this way? Did they know that they were wrong?
2. Ask the children to brainstorm ways they do not like to be treated by each other and by the teacher in the classroom-- for example, when others: touch their things, take cuts in line, call their parent names, are mean, spread rumors.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY: Have the children work in cooperative groups of three. One will be the moderator, one will be the writer and one will be the judge of what is fair. They are to make up 5 classroom rules. After all are done, meet back in the large group and share the rules that have been written down. See how many are shared by the groups. Democratically decide on five rules for the classroom.

APPENDIX I

EMPATHY

SOCIAL SKILL: Empathy

EXPECTATIONS: Students will be able to use words and actions that demonstrate sensitivity to others' feelings and thoughts.

MATERIALS: Different shoes: old shoes, running shoes, hiking boots, ballet slippers, sandals, slippers. Selection from Best Christmas Pageant Ever , pg. 49-51.

INTRODUCTION: Bring in several pairs of shoes. Ask students "What might I be feeling if I were the person wearing these shoes?" Elicit responses from the students. Read the selection from the book.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss with the children how different shoes can tell a lot about the person who wears them. Should you judge how a person is by the shoes that they wear?
2. Discuss with the children how the father in the family tried to put himself in the shoes of the Herdmans. Encourage them to put themselves in the shoes of the Herdman children.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY: Divide the students into small groups and give each group a pair of the shoes used in the beginning of the lesson. Ask each group to make up a story about who wore these shoes and what the person might have been feeling. Have each group select one person to tell the story to the class. Call on students to "put themselves in the other person's shoes" by demonstrating empathy for the person in the story with words, looks or actions.

APPENDIX M

SELF-CONTROL

By Tamara Smith

SOCIAL SKILL: Self-Control

EXPECTATIONS: Students will be able to define feelings and the behaviors that accompany them in daily life.

MATERIALS: Selection from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.

INTRODUCTION: Read the selection from the book.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss with the children how Harry and Ron were able to contain themselves even when Draco Malfoy and his friends were taunting them.
2. Discuss with the children how they have feelings and how they choose to deal with them .

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY: Divide the students into small groups and give each group a worksheet entitled "I Feel, I Do" on which they can list their feelings and several ways that you behave when you feel this way. Have them come back together as a group to share each groups findings.

APPENDIX N

RESPONSIBILITY

By Tamara Smith

SOCIAL SKILL: Social Responsibility

EXPECTATIONS: Students will be able to explain how a positive attitude helps with social responsibility.

MATERIALS: Poem "Be an Upbeat Kid."

INTRODUCTION: Read the poem with the children.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss with the children what a positive attitude can do for a person and offer examples of people who show a positive attitude.
2. Discuss people who have made a difference in this country and how their positive attitude has helped them.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY: Have the children review the lists of People who have made a difference in this century . Have them prepare their own lists of people who have made a positive difference in their lives. Have them also make suggestions how they have made a difference in others lives.

APPENDIX O

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

By Tamara Smith

SOCIAL SKILL: Resolving Conflict

EXPECTATIONS: Students will be able to analyze a conflict situation and discuss how to deal with it.

MATERIALS: Selection from Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

INTRODUCTION: Read the selection with the students

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss how Harry Potter and Ron Weasley were able to deal with conflict in a positive way and what the implications are for them.
2. Have the children offer suggestions for handling difficult situations. Have them work in pairs to decide what situations are difficult to deal with in their lives. Bring the pairs back together and discuss the situations.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY: Have then children fill in the WWWWWH (Who, What, When, Where, Why and How) charts as they pertain to Harry and Ron's situation. Then have them fill in another chart as it concerns their own situation.

APPENDIX P

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Fifth Grade

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APPENDIX Q

RESPECT

BY BONNIE RIVES

TARGETED INTELLIGENCE: Verbal/Linguistics

SUPPORTING INTELLIGENCE: Interpersonal

THINKING SKILL: Creative problem solving

SOCIAL SKILLS: Listening and working together

CONTENT FOCUS: Language Arts

MATERIALS: Note paper and pencil for each person

TASK FOCUS: Language Arts and Social Skills

PRODUCT: Devise a solution to a problem

PROBLEM: How to build teamwork and be creative

ACTIVITY:

1. Students form cooperative groups of three. Review cooperative guidelines and specific roles.
2. Students are to read the problem in their cooperative groups.
3. Students discuss the problem and agree on the best solution.
4. When all groups are finished, the groups will exchange solutions and read them out loud to their groups.

REFLECTIONS:

1. What have you learned about teamwork?
2. How can compromising make a solution easier?
3. What did you learn, from respecting other's property?

APPENDIX R

EMPATHY

BY BONNIE RIVES

TARGETED INTELLIGENCE: Verbal/Linguistics

SUPPORTING INTELLIGENCE: Interpersonal and Visual/Spatial

THINKING SKILL: Creative problem solving

SOCIAL SKILLS: Listening, Decision Making, Reasoning, Working Together, and Shared Responsibility.

CONTENT FOCUS: Language Arts

MATERIALS: Magazines, Glue, Scissors, and Poster Board

TASK FOCUS: Language Arts and Art

PRODUCT: Collage

PROBLEM: How to build teamwork and be creative

ACTIVITY:

1. Divide students into cooperative groups of six.
2. Assign roles.
   A. Editor: Decides if the picture goes along with the theme.
   B. Checker: Makes sure everyone understands their part and motivates everyone in their efforts.
   C. Three cutters: Cut the pictures out of magazines.
   D. Glue chief: Glues the pictures on the poster board.
3. The teacher reads a story to the class, that deals with empathy.
4. Students are to make a collage that shows feelings, thoughts, and emotions of other people.

REFLECTIONS:

1. What did you learn by making this collage?
2. How well did your group work together, compared to other groups in class?
3. What ideas do you have, that can help others be more empathetic.

APPENDIX S

SELF-CONTROL

BY BONNIE RIVES

TARGETED INTELLIGENCE: Verbal/Linguistic

SUPPORTING INTELLIGENCE: Interpersonal, and Visual/Spatial

THINKING SKILL: Problem solving, and Reasoning

SOCIAL SKILL: Listening, Observing, Following Directions, and Communicating

CONTENT FOCUS: Language Arts

MATERIALS: Interview questionnaire, pencil, colored markers, and drawing paper

TASK FOCUS: Language Arts and Social Skills

PRODUCT: Devise a title for the solution to the problem and create a cartoon character to express your idea.

PROBLEM: How to do an interview , solve a problem, and express it in a drawing

ACTIVITY:

1. Students form pair-share in groups of two.
2. Students read a story about a sore loser named Annie.
3. Students discuss the problem together.
4. Students interview 5 other students about their experiences in being a sore loser and what they did to overcome the problem.
5. Pair-share groups use one of the solutions and create a title to go along with a cartoon character to help other students become aware of self-control in resolving conflict.

REFLECTIONS:

1. What have you learned about working together?
2. What did you learn from interviewing other students about self-control?
3. How can being a good loser help you in life?

APPENDIX I

RESPONSIBILITY

BY BONNIE RIVES

TARGETED INTELLIGENCE: Musical/Rhythmic

SUPPORTING INTELLIGENCE: Bodily/Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Verbal/Linguistics

THINKING SKILL: Awareness of Different Beats, Synthesis, Decision Making, and Creative Recall

SOCIAL SKILL: Responsibility, Listening, Team Work, Shared Responsibility, and Pride

CONTENT FOCUS: Problem Solving

MATERIALS: "The New Kid on the Block," poems by Jack Prelutsky, note paper and pencils.

TASK FOCUS: Students are divided into cooperative groups of six, and create a song, rap, poem, or jingle about their own responsibilities.

PRODUCT: Students will perform their song, rap, poem, or jingle in front of the class. These will be video taped and shown to the class at a later date.

PROBLEM: How to write a song, rap, poem, or jingle in a cooperative group and combine movements to it.

ACTIVITY:

1. Divide students into cooperative groups.
2. Assign roles:
   A. Composer: Writes down the words of the song, rap, poem, or jingle on paper.
   B. Choreographer: Directs the movement that will coincide with the song, rap, poem, or jingle.
   C. Checker: Make sure everyone understands their parts for the performance.
   D. Secret Agent: Informs the teacher of any problems the group is facing.
   E. Director: Directs everyone while practicing for their performance.
   F. Encourager: Motivates the team in their efforts, while they work together.
3. Give the following instructions: Each group is to create a song, rap, poem, or jingle with movements, that deals with a responsibility they have to do.
4. Each group will perform their routine in front of the class and will be video-taped, so they may view it at a later date.
5. Students are given three days to write, choreograph, and practice their routine before they perform in front of the class.

REFLECTIONS:

1. What did you learn by writing and choreographing this routine?
2. How has this helped you become more responsible?
3. How comfortable did you feel doing this activity?

APPENDIX U

RESOLVING CONFLICT

BY BONNIE RIVES

TARGETED INTELLIGENCE: Verbal Linguistics

SUPPORTING INTELLIGENCE: Interpersonal

THINKING SKILL: Creative problem solving with direct instruction

SOCIAL SKILLS: Listening, Working with others, Decision Making, and Shared Responsibilities

CONTENT FOCUS: Language Arts

MATERIALS: Pencil and handout of "How Conflict Grows"

TASK FOCUS: Language Arts and Social Skills

PRODUCT: Devise a solution to the problem on the handout and role play.

PROBLEM: How to build teamwork and be creative

ACTIVITY I:

1. Teacher reads story to class.
2. Teacher leads discussion on the story.
3. Students fill out circle on "How Conflict Grows".

ACTIVITY II:

1. Students form pair-share groups of two and discuss how they will solve the problem they are given.
2. Students will perform their role-play in front of the class.
3. Students are given the following topics in resolving conflict.
   a. Problem with a teammate who does not share the ball.
   b. Problem with an opponent, because of unfair play.
   c. Problem with a friend who took their seat at lunch.
   d. Being a good sport when losing.
   e. Being a good sport when winning.
   f. Problem with an older student who bumps into them in the hallway.
   g. Borrowing someone's clothes and not returning them.
   h. Losing money, that was for lunch.
   i. Laughing at someone, when they make a mistake.
   j. Making faces and teasing.
   k. Making fun of someone with a handicap.

ACTIVITY III:

1. Students fill out the "Problem-Solving Chart.
2. Students read their charts out loud to the class.

REFLECTIONS:

1. How can conflict grow?
2. How can practicing role-play help you when a real situation occurs?
2. Why is it good to have a plan, such as "Stop, Think, and Act" when you have a conflict?

APPENDIX V

Literature Sources
Seventh Grade

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